

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 AF-04 SY-04 EB-07 DOTE-00

FAA-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 USSS-00 /087 W

----- 041107

R 121605Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7690

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 7649

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OGEN

SUBJ: HIJACKING OF BRITISH VC-10 AIRCRAFT

1. DURING MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA DEC. 12, WE REVIEWED CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING HIJACKING OF BRITISH VC-10 AIRCRAFT NOV 22. I SAID THAT WE WERE PLEASED THAT LOSS OF LIFE HAD BEEN KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND THAT THE EIGHT TERRORISTS WHO HAD ASSASSINATED AMERICAN DIPLOMATS AT KHARTOUM HAD NOT BEEN RELEASED FROM CAIRO. I STATED THAT USG BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND ORDER, INCLUDING BRINGING AN END TO AIR PIRACY, REQUIRES THAT HIJACKERS BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. I NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT HAD TURNED TERRORISTS OVER TO PLO. IN VIEW OF TUNISIAN GOVT'S COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL
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LAW AND RECOGNIZED PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE, DID THIS

ACTION REFLECT TUNISIAN CONVICTION THAT HIJACKERS WOULD BE TRIED FOR THEIR CRIMES?

2. PRIME MINISTER CONFINED HIS RESPONSE TO THIS QUESTION TO CALLING MY ATTENTION TO PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY ABU IYAD (TUNIS 7549) IN WHICH LATTER HAD INDICATED AS MUCH. PRIME MINISTER THEN REVIEWED EVENTS, REFERRING INTER ALIA TO BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE THAT HIJACKED AIRCRAFT BE ALLOWED TO LAND. HE ALSO CITED TUNISIAN HUMANITARIAN CONCERN AT BEING TOLD THAT TWO WOUNDED PASSENGERS ON AIRCRAFT NEEDED URGENT MEDICAL CARE. HE CLAIMED THAT IN FINAL PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS BRITISH GOVERNMENT REQUESTED THAT AIRCRAFT NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE TUNISIA. PRIME MINISTER FELT THAT IN ORDER TO SAVE HUMAN LIFE GOT HAD NO OPTION BUT TO ALLOW TERRORISTS TO COME OFF AIRCRAFT ON THEIR TERMS.

3. WHEN I NOTED VARYING REPORTS RE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS OF TERRORISTS, PRIME MINISTER REMARKED THAT IT PROBABLY JUST AS WELL THAT WHEREABOUTS OF HIJACKERS HAVE NOT RPT NOT BEEN REVEALED.

4. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER'S RELUCTANCE TO ANSWER DIRECTLY MY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER TUNISIANS ARE SATISFIED THAT PLO WILL BRING TERRORISTS TO TRIAL SUGGESTS THAT NOTWITHSTANDING ABU IYAD'S DECLARATION, PLO HAS GIVEN TUNISIANS NO ASSURANCES THAT THE ORGANIZATION INTENDS TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM. RE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS OF TERRORISTS, IT COULD WELL BE THAT TUNISIANS DO NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHERE THEY ARE AND WOULD JUST AS SOON NOT KNOW.
SEELYE

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